

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 809

JC 890 415

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TITLE Evaluation of the Supergraduate Program, Phase 1.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Los Angeles. Office of Academic Interinstitutional Programs.
PUB DATE Sep 89
NOTE 20p.; For a related report, see JC 890 416.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Bound Students; College Preparation; Community Colleges; Disadvantaged; *Minority Groups; Program Descriptions; *Program Evaluation; Questionnaires; *Student Motivation; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Supergraduate Program CA

ABSTRACT

The Supergraduate program was developed by Hamilton High School (HHS), West Los Angeles College, and the University of California at Los Angeles to motivate and prepare underrepresented, "B minus" and "C plus" students to graduate from high school and consider pursuing postsecondary education. Twenty-five students started the program by taking a five-unit English grammar course at HHS in the summer of 1989. In the first phase of a planned evaluation of the program, a questionnaire was distributed to these students to determine the effect of the program on student competence in critical thinking/writing and to measure changes in student attitudes toward further education. An analysis of the 22 completed questionnaires revealed the following: (1) 77% of the respondents were female, over 90% were between the ages of 15 and 16, and 54% were Black, 18% Latino, 9% Mexican-American, 9% White, and 5% Filipino; (2) by the end of the program, all students indicated that they had a more powerful vocabulary, an improved use of English grammar and writing skills, and were able to express their ideas more clearly in writing; (3) all of the students expressed a recognition of the importance of solid English and writing skills; (4) mandatory attendance requirements, working in groups when composing and revising, and written comments/feedback from the instructor were cited as helpful features of the course; (5) students indicated that most of their parents believed their child could succeed in school and that they should attend college; and (6) students stated that the program helped them to gain a better sense of their academic ability, helped motivate them to attend college, and helped them to gain confidence in their ability to succeed at college. The study concludes that the program was successful in improving skills and motivation, but cautions against drawing any long-term conclusions since not all of the students completed the course and almost 50% received a grade of "C" or worse. The student questionnaire and response percentages are appended. (VVC)

ED310809

Evaluation of the Supergraduate Program: Phase I

Prepared by

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September 1989

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JC890415

Evaluation of the Supergraduate Program: Phase I Executive Summary

Introduction. The Supergraduate Program, developed by Hamilton High School, West Los Angeles College, and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), was designed to motivate and prepare underrepresented students to graduate from high school, to go on to a community college, and eventually, to a four-year institution. The program focuses on those "B minus" and "C plus" students who have not fully considered postsecondary education as a viable option.

Description of the Student Population. (Refer to page 2).

- o 77% of the Supergraduates were female and 23% were male.
- o Over 90% of the students were between the ages of 15 and 16.
- o The ethnic distribution of the Supergraduates was 54% Black, 18% Latino, 9% Mexican-American, 9% White, and 5% Filipino.
- o A higher percentage of the Supergraduates' mothers (64%) had either some formal college education or had a college degree, as compared to the Supergraduates fathers (45%).
- o Of the students with college age siblings, 66% indicated that at least one brother or sister had either gone to college or had graduated from college.
- o 20% of the students obtained an "A" in their summer English course, 36% a "B", 32% a "C", and 12% a "D".

Findings. (Refer to pages 3 - 8).

- o By the end of the program the Supergraduates recognized the need to have a powerful vocabulary. In addition, they indicated that they now had a more powerful vocabulary.
- o The Supergraduates indicated that the English course they took helped them to use English grammar more correctly, use a dictionary more efficiently, write better essays, think of things to write about, and express ideas more easily when writing.
- o The mandatory attendance expectations was seen as a helpful feature of the course.
- o The Supergraduates indicated that their parents believed that they could succeed in school and that they should attend college.
- o The Supergraduates indicated that the program helped them to understand and believe that they could do better in high school, helped them gain a better sense of their academic ability, helped motivate them to attend college, and helped them to gain confidence in their ability to succeed once at college.

Conclusions. From the students responses to the questionnaire and the distribution of course grades, it is clear that the program was successful in improving the students' English, language, and communication skills and in motivating them to consider post-secondary education as a viable alternative. (Refer to page 8.)

Evaluation of the Supergraduate Program: Phase I

INTRODUCTION.

The Supergraduate Program, developed by Hamilton High School, West Los Angeles College, and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), was designed to motivate and prepare underrepresented students to graduate from high school, to go on to a community college, and eventually, to a four-year institution. The program focuses on those "B minus" and "C plus" students who have not fully considered postsecondary education as a viable option.

The Supergraduate Program intends to increase the success rate of these students by providing them with the academic skills necessary to succeed at a postsecondary institution. Students will work to develop their skills in the areas of critical thinking, writing, research, and study strategies. In addition, the Program places emphasis on parental involvement, counseling, and tutoring to reinforce the achievement of academic goals.

The first cohort of Supergraduates started in the Summer of 1989. During the Spring of 1989, 724 Supergraduate applications were sent out, and 79 were returned. From the 79 returned applications, a panel of Hamilton High School, West Los Angeles College, and UCLA faculty members and counselors chose 31 students for the Program. Of this group of 31 students, 25 completed their first summer in the program. Students started the program by taking a five unit English course at Hamilton High School, designed to strengthen their English grammar, vocabulary, critical thinking, and reading skills.

METHODOLOGY.

The evaluation of the Supergraduate Program is longitudinal in nature, and designed to assess the programs' effectiveness by determining the extent to which the program has: (1) developed the students' academic skills; (2) aided the students' progress toward academic success at Hamilton High School, West Los Angeles College, and UCLA; (3) helped students successfully make the transition from high school through university; and (4) developed students' interest and motivation in post-secondary education. The first phase of the evaluation, or the portion covered in this report, was designed to understand the effects the Supergraduate Program has on developing student competence in critical thinking and writing and developing their interest and motivation in post-secondary education.

Students evaluated their first summer in the program using the *Supergraduate Program Questionnaire* (Ackermann). (See Appendix I for a copy of the questionnaire, with accompanying means, percentiles, and counts.) The paper and pencil questionnaire was completed by students during their last week in class. The questionnaire addressed aspects of the course itself, the students' motivation to succeed in the program, and the students' assessment of the benefits of the program. The questionnaire contained both close-ended and open-ended items, and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Many of the questions were based on five-point likert scales, with a "1" representing a negative response and a "5" representing a positive response. Of the 25 students in the program, 22 completed the *Supergraduate Program Questionnaire*, indicating a high response rate of 88%.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDENT POPULATION.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the students were female and 23% were male. Over 90% of the student were between the ages of 15 and 16. The ethnic distribution of the Supergraduates was 54% Black, 18% Latino, 9% Mexican-American, 9% White, 5% Filipino, and 5% other. Six (27%) students spoke another language fluently, predominately Spanish. One student indicated that he/she had a disability, which was identified as dyslexia. Six students (27%) had a summer job, working an average of 21 hours per week. (See questions 44 through 49, respectively.)

The students were also asked about the academic history of their family (questions 50 and 51). Mothers reportedly had more formal education than the fathers. Eighteen percent (18%) indicated that the highest degree obtained by their mothers was a high school diploma or GED, while 27% indicated that their fathers had a high school diploma or GED. But, 41% indicated that their mothers had some college education, with 23% indicating that their mothers had a college degree. This is compared to the 27% that indicated that their fathers had some college education and 18% indicating that their fathers graduated from college. Of the students with college age siblings, 66% indicated that at least one brother or sister in their family had either gone to college or had graduated from college. These findings indicate that, for the most part, this cohort of Supergraduates will not be the first member of their family to go to college.

FINDINGS

The questionnaire addressed two major portions of the students' Supergraduate experience -- academics and attitudinal. The academic portion of the questionnaire focused on the students' exposure to the writing process and their assessment of what they learned. The attitudinal section of the questionnaire focused on the students' assessment of the Supergraduate program and their attitudes toward post-secondary education.

Academics. The first section of the questionnaire asked students the extent to which they used certain strategies when writing a paper (see questions 1 - 6). All strategies listed were taught in the English course and are abilities and skills needed to be a proficient writer. Students indicated that **More than half the time to Almost every time** they gathered ideas or organized their notes before they started to write and made changes in organization, content, and grammar after writing a first draft. (On a scale of "1" meaning **Never or hardly ever** to "5" meaning **Almost every time**, mean ratings ranged from 4.1 to 4.6.)

Students were also asked to gauge change in their skills and attitudes toward English and writing, from the time they entered the program till the time they completed the program. From Table 1, it is clear that the program was very successful in reinforcing the importance of solid English and writing skills. Students indicated that they **Strongly Agreed** with the need not only to have a powerful vocabulary, but with the statement that they had a more powerful vocabulary now, than at the start of the program. In addition, students indicated that the English course they took helped them to use English grammar more correctly, use a dictionary more efficiently, write better essays, think of things to write about, and express ideas more easily when writing. Students also indicated that they now liked what they write more and enjoy writing more, than before the program. Clearly, the goal of stressing writing and English skills was fulfilled by the program.

The English course the students took was designed to model a university English course. That is to say, the course met for four hours each day, covered a great deal of information each day, operated under the assumption that all students would attend class every day and be on time. In addition, the students were encouraged to work in groups and rely on both their peers and their instructor for help. Students noted that mandatory attendance (4.3), working in groups when composing and revising, (4.0 and 4.2), and assisting fellow students with revisions (4.2), helped them become successful in this course (see questions 17, 7, 8, and 10, respectively). They still, however, found instructor feedback extremely helpful ([4.7], question 9).

Table 1
Students' Mean Ratings on Changes in Writing Skills

Question*	Mean Rating**
It is valuable to have a powerful vocabulary.	4.7
I use English grammar more correctly.	4.6
I have a more powerful vocabulary.	4.6
I like what I write more.	4.3
I think that I am a better essay writer.	4.2
I use a dictionary more efficiently.	4.1
I express my ideas in writing more easily.	4.1
I find it easier to think of what I want to say so I can begin writing.	4.1
I enjoy writing more.	3.9

*Question - See question #11, #25, #26, #20, #21, #24, #23, #22, and #19, respectively.

**Mean Rating - Based on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with a "1" indicating that the student Strongly Disagreed with the statement and a "5" indicating that the student Strongly Agreed with the statement.

When the students were asked to list some of the specific ways in which the Supergraduate Program helped them to improve their writing, reading, and communicating, 41% indicated the program improved their skills because of the group work activities and 32% indicated that it was because of the stress on vocabulary building. Students were also asked to list the specific ways in which the instructor helped them improve their writing, reading, and communicating. One-hundred percent (100%) of the comments were positive, clearly indicating that the students were very pleased with their instructor. Almost one-half (45%) of the students indicated that the written comments and feedback provided by the instructor were the most helpful and 14% indicated that the individual conferences the instructor held with the students were the most helpful in improving their writing and reading skills.

In addition to the students' assessment of the course and their abilities, grades for all 25 students were obtained from West Los Angeles College. Twenty percent (20%) of the students obtained an "A", 36% a "B", 32% a "C", and 12% a "D". Students were evenly distributed over grades, indicating that students represented a wide range of ability levels. While obtaining a high grade in a course is dependent on ability, it is also dependent on good study skills. Developing appropriate study habits and skills is one of the goals of the Supergraduate Program. When asked to indicate the average number of hours spent studying outside of class, students indicated that it was approximately 13 hours per week (question 35). In addition, students Strongly Agreed with the statement that the program motivated them to study outside of school time (question 16). Having a regular, quiet place to study is also important in the development of good study habits. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the students indicated that they had a regular, quiet place to study. Students indicated that they usually study by themselves (100%), with other students in their class (41%), or with other family members (27%). No student indicated that they usually studied with a tutor (see question 37).

Attitudinal. Students were also asked a series of questions regarding their attitudes toward post-secondary education and their parents and friends attitudes toward post-secondary education. This cohort of students is receiving a great deal of support from their parents (see Table 2). Parents clearly believed that their child could succeed in school (4.9) and that their child should attend college (4.7). Conversely, the Supergraduates Neither agreed or disagreed with the statement that their friends encouraged them to achieve in school (3.5).

Students also indicated that the Supergraduate Program helped them to understand and believe that they could do better in high school, during next academic year (4.7), helped them gain

Table 2
Students' Mean Ratings on
Attitudes Towards Post-Secondary Education

Question*	Mean Rating**
My parents believe that I can succeed in school.	4.9
My parents encourage me to attend college.	4.7
I believe that I can do better in high school next year.	4.7
I am more motivated to attend college.	4.7
I am more confident that I can succeed in college.	4.7
This program helps me to know other that want to attend college.	4.6
I have a better sense of my ability to achieve in school.	4.6
My friends encourage me to achieve in school.	3.5

*Question - See question #13, #12, #27, #28, #29, #14, #30, and #15, respectively.

**Mean Rating - Based on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with a "1" indicating that the student Strongly Disagreed with the statement and a "5" indicating that the student Strongly Agreed with the statement.

a better sense of their ability to achieve in school (4.6), helped motivate them to attend college (4.7), and helped them to gain confidence in their ability to succeed once at college (4.7). The Supergraduate Program also provided them with an opportunity to get to know other students, with similar backgrounds, who also want to attend college (4.6). Clearly, this cohort of Supergraduates and their parents have a strong commitment to a well-defined set of goals. This will undoubtedly increase the likelihood of successfully completing their goal of obtaining a degree from West Los Angeles College and from UCLA.

Finally, students were given the opportunity to comment on whether or not their expectations of the program were fulfilled, the aspects of the program they liked the most and least, and ways in which they would change the program to make it better. When asked if their expectation were fulfilled, 95% said that they were. Students tended to indicate that their expectations were fulfilled because they learned a lot, their writing improved, they were made to work hard and found out that they could, and that they were intellectually challenged. A representative statement is as follows:

- o "I feel that my expectations have been fulfilled in the Supergraduate Program ... (because) ... I learned better study habits, a more efficient vocabulary, and to be more responsible."

When asked what aspects of the program they liked the most, 41% indicated that it was the class and group discussions, 18% said that it was the speakers, 14% indicated that it was the writing assignments, and 14% indicated that it was the chance to go to college. Again, representative statements are as follows:

- o "The aspects that I liked about the program the most is how it gives minorities a chance in life."
- o "The ability for minorities to have the opportunity to go to college."

When asked what aspects of the program they liked the least, the predominant response was "Nothing!" Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the students did indicate that there was too much homework and 14% indicated that they did not enjoy working in groups. And, when asked what specific changes would make the program better, 45% indicated that they would not change the program at all. A small percentage of students did indicate that they would like to go on organized field trips. It should be noted, however, that

students did have an opportunity to tour both West Los Angeles College and UCLA once during the summer.

CONCLUSIONS.

From the students responses to the questionnaire and the distribution of course grades, it is clear that the Supergraduate Program was successful in improving the students' English, language, and communication skills and in motivating them to consider post-secondary education as a viable alternative. One should, however, caution against drawing any long-term conclusions from the data. First, not all students successfully completed the course. Almost 50% of the students received a "C" or worse in the course. Second, this cohort of students have only been in the program for a short period of time. Throughout the 1989-1990 academic year, students' academic progress and growth will be monitored. As the students move through the program, a better indication of the success of the program will be noted.

Appendix I

SUPERGRADUATE PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE
SUMMER 1989

Please assist in the evaluation of the SUPERGRADUATE PROGRAM by completing this questionnaire. By gathering this information we will learn how to make this program better for you.

DIRECTIONS: Using the response categories listed below, select the number that most closely matches your answer and write it on the lines provided.

- 5. Almost every time
- 4. More than half the time
- 3. About half the time
- 2. Less than half the time
- 1. Never or hardly ever

WHEN YOU WRITE PAPERS, HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO THE FOLLOWING?

(N=22)

- 1. 4.1 Talk, read, or take notes to gather ideas before you write.
- 2. 4.3 Organize notes in writing before you write your rough draft.
- 3. 4.1 Write in drafts to discover what you really want to say.
- 4. 4.6 Make changes in the organization of your ideas after you write a paper.
- 5. 4.5 Make changes in the content (e.g., ideas you included) after you have write a paper.
- 6. 4.3 Make changes in your use of grammar after you write a paper.

DIRECTIONS: Using the scale shown below, select the number that most closely matches your opinion about each statement and write it on the line provided.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

(N=22)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 7. | 4.0 | I find it helpful to work in groups when composing my writings. |
| 8. | 4.2 | I find it helpful to work in groups when revising my drafts. |
| 9. | 4.7 | I find it helpful to ask the instructor for assistance when revising my drafts. |
| 10. | 4.0 | I am comfortable helping others revise their writings. |
| 11. | 4.7 | It is valuable to have a powerful vocabulary. |
| 12. | 4.7 | My parents encourage me to attend college. |
| 13. | 4.9 | My parents believe that I can succeed in school. |
| 14. | 4.5 | This program helps me to know others that want to attend college. |
| 15. | 3.5 | My friends encourage me to achieve in school. |
| 16. | 4.5 | This program motivates me to study outside school time. |
| 17. | 4.3 | This course's mandatory attendance expectation helped me become more successful. |
| 18. | 4.0 | The journal writings I had to do for this course made it easier for me to express my ideas in writing. |

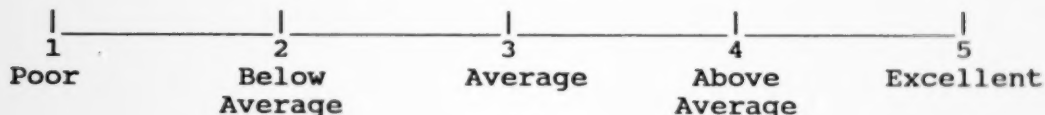
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

In comparison with my feelings and experiences before participating in this program...

(N=22)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 19. | 3.9 | I enjoy writing more. |
| 20. | 4.3 | In general, I like what I write more. |
| 21. | 4.2 | I think that I am a better essay writer. |
| 22. | 4.1 | I find it easier to think of what I want to say so I can begin writing. |
| 23. | 4.1 | I express my ideas in writing more easily. |
| 24. | 4.1 | I use a dictionary more efficiently. |
| 25. | 4.6 | I use English grammar more correctly. |
| 26. | 4.6 | I have a more powerful vocabulary. |
| 27. | 4.7 | I believe that I can do better in high school next year. |
| 28. | 4.7 | I am more motivated to attend college. |
| 29. | 4.7 | I am more confident that I can succeed in college. |
| 30. | 4.6 | I have a better sense of my ability to achieve in school. |

DIRECTIONS: Using the scale shown below, rate the English 31 textbooks by selecting the number that best matches your opinion and writing it on the lines provided.



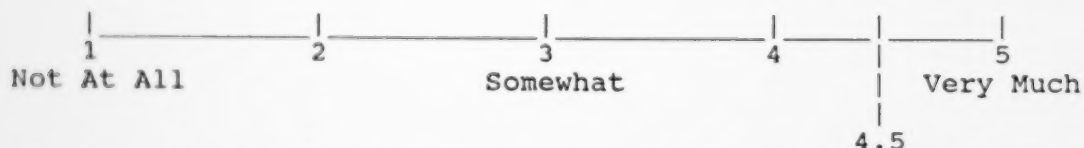
(N=22)

31. 4.3 English Skills with Readings
32. 4.3 The Short Prose Reader
33. 4.7 30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary

34. Did you attend the tour of West Los Angeles Community College and UCLA? (Check your response.)

13 (59%)	Yes
9 (41%)	No

If yes, to what extent did the tour motivate you to attend college? (Circle the number that best matches your response.)



35. On the average, how many hours a week do you study outside of class?

~13 Hours Per week

36. Do you have a regular, quiet place to study? (Check your response.)

18 (82%)	Yes (where: _____)
4 (18%)	No

37. I usually study: (Check all responses that apply.)

22 (100%)	By myself
9 (41%)	With other students in my class
2 (9%)	With friends not in my class
6 (27%)	With family members
0 (0%)	With a tutor

38. Were your EXPECTATIONS of the SUPERGRADUATE PROGRAM fulfilled? Why or Why not?

21 (95%) - Yes expectations were fulfilled

Representative statements were:

- Learned a lot
- Improved my writing
- Made me work hard
- Challenged me

39. List some of the specific ways in which the SUPERGRADUATE PROGRAM helped you IMPROVE YOUR WRITING, READING, AND COMMUNICATING.

9 (41%) Groups

7 (32%) Vocabulary

40. List some of the specific ways in which your INSTRUCTOR helped you IMPROVE YOUR WRITING, READING, AND COMMUNICATING. If your instructor was of little or no help, please say so.

22 (100%) comments were positive

Representative comments were:

- 10 (45%) written comments and feedback on papers
- 3 (14%) individual conferences

41. What aspects of the program did you like the most? Why?

- 9 (41%) class and group discussions
- 4 (18%) speakers
- 3 (14%) writing assignments
- 3 (14%) chance to go to college

42. What aspects of the program did you like the least? Why?

- 8 (36%) nothing (Liked everything about the program)
- 6 (27%) too much homework
- 3 (14%) group work

43. What are some of the specific ways that you would change this program to make it better?

- 10 (45%) would make no changes in the program
- 3 (14%) have field trips

(N=22)

44. Your gender:

5 (23%) Male
17 (77%) Female

45. Your age:

2 (9%) 14 years old
10 (46%) 15 years old
10 (46%) 16 years old

46. Your ethnicity: (Check only one response.)

0 (0%) Asian
1 (5%) Filipino/Pilipano
12 (54%) Black/African American
4 (18%) Latino
2 (9%) Mexican-American
0 (0%) American Indian
2 (9%) White/Caucasian
1 (5%) Other (Please specify:_____)

47. Do you speak another language fluently?

6 (27%) Yes (If so, what?_____)
16 (73%) No

48. Do you have any disabilities?

1 (4%) Yes (If so, what? Dyslexia)
21 (96%) No

49. Do you have a job this summer?

6 (27%) Yes (If so, specify number of hours: ~21)
16 (73%) No

50. What is the highest educational level completed by your family members? (Check one response in each column.)

Mother	Father	
2 (9%)	1 (5%)	No High School
1 (4%)	2 (9%)	Some High School
4 (18%)	6 (27%)	High School Completed (diploma or GED)
9 (41%)	6 (27%)	Some College
5 (23%)	4 (18%)	College Degree
1 (4%)	3 (14%)	Don't Know

51. Have any of your brothers or sisters gone to college? (Check one response only.)

6 (27%)	Yes, went to college
4 (18%)	Yes, graduated from college
5 (23%)	No
7 (32%)	No brothers/sisters <u>or</u> brothers/sisters are not of college age

52. Are you planning to go to college when you graduate from high school?

21 (96%)	Yes
1 (4%)	No

If yes, what subject(s) would you like to study?

53. What is your West Los Angeles Community College Identification Number (use the number you were assigned at the beginning of the program):

West Los Angeles Community College or Social Security Number:

54. Final Grade in English 31 course:

5 (20%)	A
9 (36%)	B
8 (32%)	C
3 (12%)	D

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.